

*Letter of Nestorius to John of Antioch*

Nestorius to the most God-beloved and most holy fellow minister John.

I would have thought it easier for people to slander me on every other matter rather than to allege that I hold incorrect views on the orthodox faith. Hitherto, because of the war I am waging against all the heretics, I have been delighted that many thousands of enemies have risen against me. Nevertheless, this trial too I ought to bear with joy since, if we maintain proper vigilance, it could make us highly trustworthy as regards orthodoxy. What has happened to us has also revealed how much your religiousness takes thought on our behalf.

For what you lately wrote to me and to our son the most magnificent and Christ-loving Irenaeus, and also to the most God-beloved bishops Musaeus and Helladius, has expressed your religiousness's sincere love for us more clearly than a clarion call, as also your great concern for the tranquility of the entire universal church; we too have a particular concern for it, and would think it utter madness and hatred of our brethren if we alone, in opposition to everyone else, were to assume authority in some way over the issues that have been raised, even though we know that talk of 'Theotokos' is adopted as their own by many heretics, and we are aware that some people here, who have adopted this term heedlessly, have as a result fallen into heretical and far from pious notions, in particular those of the impious Arius and Apollinarius.

Consequently, knowing from what you have written (as I have said) both your religiousness's good will towards ourselves and your most proper concern for the churches of God, I have hastened in this my letter to resolve for your soul dear to God the contention over the issue that has been raised, and to inform you immediately that even before your religiousness's letter I myself resolved the matter, so to speak. I bore in mind that as a result of the discussion by all of us it was necessary to explain in harmony and unanimity the expression by which she is called Theotokos, not in order to postpone even briefly acknowledgement of this expression by myself, but so that none of those who have the least knowledge of the things of God should have the opportunity, by exploiting our words on the subject, to cause division in the church.

For I think that your religiousness is well aware that, as soon as we came here, we found some of those who belong to the church in factious disagreement with one another: some of them called the holy Virgin Theotokos, while others called her Anthropotokos. Consequently, in order to reconcile both factions with care and not to neglect any one of the sheep, lest it perish, acting as we see the Lord of all things to have done, we called her Christotokos, so that this expression might clearly indicate both of the two, that is, God and man. On the subject of the expressions in the gospel I have allowed those who so wished to give the Virgin the name Theotokos, according to

piety, that is, not in an Apollinarian or Arian sense, and not as if the Godhead of the Only-begotten took its origin from the holy Virgin, but because of the account of the union which at the very beginning was given in the words of an angel about the conception.

My request is therefore that you recover from your anxiety about this matter and recognize that by the grace of God we hold and always have held the same beliefs as you in relation to the orthodox faith, and that you pray as usual that both in this and all other matters we receive help from Christ the Lord and have the privilege of conversing together. For it is clear that, if we see each other, when God brings about the council we desire, we shall settle both this matter and whatever else is necessary for the correction and assistance of the whole church, in agreement and without offence, in such a way that, once everything that has been settled by a joint and universal decree, it will be accepted with faith and give nobody scope for contradiction, even if prone to do so. Your religiousness ought not to be surprised by the Egyptian's customary presumption, since you have numerous examples of this from the past. But in a short time, God willing, our judgement on this matter too will receive praise.

To all the brotherhood that is with you, I and those who are with me send greetings. May you, who deserve all honour and are most dear to God, continue to enjoy good health and to pray for us.

*After the subscription:* Foreseeing, as I judge, [the battle that will soon take place] against those who seek an occasion for one, we are using other means that should provide further assistance. For after the letter of your religiousness, in a teaching that we delivered publicly in church, we won by God's grace yet greater support from the clergy, the people, and those at the imperial court.